Why Exhaustion is not the Only Measure of a Successful Play Session

You want a tired dog after a day of play with their buddies. We understand your goal and will help you tire out your best friend while also monitoring the overall safety and health of your dog. It's important that exhaustion is not our only measure of success when you bring your dog for a play session. Our approach to your dog's day in off-leash play is to balance physical exercise, mental activities, and rest periods. All three are equally important components to keeping your dog safe and healthy when socializing with other dogs.

Physical exercise is the most obvious benefit of off-leash play and it's what most pet parents think about when they drop their dog off to play. But for your dog's health, we also consider it important to provide mental stimulation, which allows your dog to think and use his brain during the day. Mental work is tiring for your dog while building their confidence and self-control. And naturally, after all this physical and mental work, dogs need rest. This is why we include formal rest periods as an important component of our health and safety program for your pet. Dogs that get overly tired are less tolerant and more grumpy (just like kids) which increases risk of injury.

Research studies report that dogs need 12-18 hours of sleep per day. Dogs that require amounts on the higher end of the scale include:



- Puppies
- Senior dogs
- Giant and large breeds
- Dogs in active households or with extreme exercise routines
- Dogs that attend dog daycare multiple days per week or are staying away from home for long periods of time
- Dogs participating in sports like agility, fly ball, or rally-o

Sleep habits of dogs also differ from humans. Napping on and off during the day is a normal pattern for all dogs studied. Formal rest periods are offered during play visits to mirror this normal pattern and to allow dogs to reach deeper sleep levels. Providing a private, quiet area for rest periods allow dogs to reach the restful deep sleep levels they need to stay healthy and happy.

Dogs may take natural rest breaks during playgroups, but it is the rare dog that will relax and enter a deep sleep. Most dogs napping in the playgroup are in light sleep, but very alert so they can jump up whenever something exciting happens. They do not reach the restful sleep stages needed to keep their brain healthy. Nineteenth century sleep deprivation studies performed on dogs confirmed degenerative changes in their brains resulted from lack of rest.

We include formal rest periods as a part of our play sessions to help ensure the long-term health and mental well being of your dog. Your happy and healthy dog is the most important measure of our success.

The varying dog sleep positions provide clues to the sleep level they have achieved.

- Stomach sleepers are in very light sleep, ready to jump up at the slightest disturbance
- Curling up is also a light sleep stage as the dog is conserving body heat and protecting themselves
- Side sleepers do reach a deep restful level of sleep
- Back sleepers also reach a deep and restful sleep level and reflect a secure and confident dog

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